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THE Unexplained

MYSTERIES OF MIND SPACE & TIME

No end to Borley

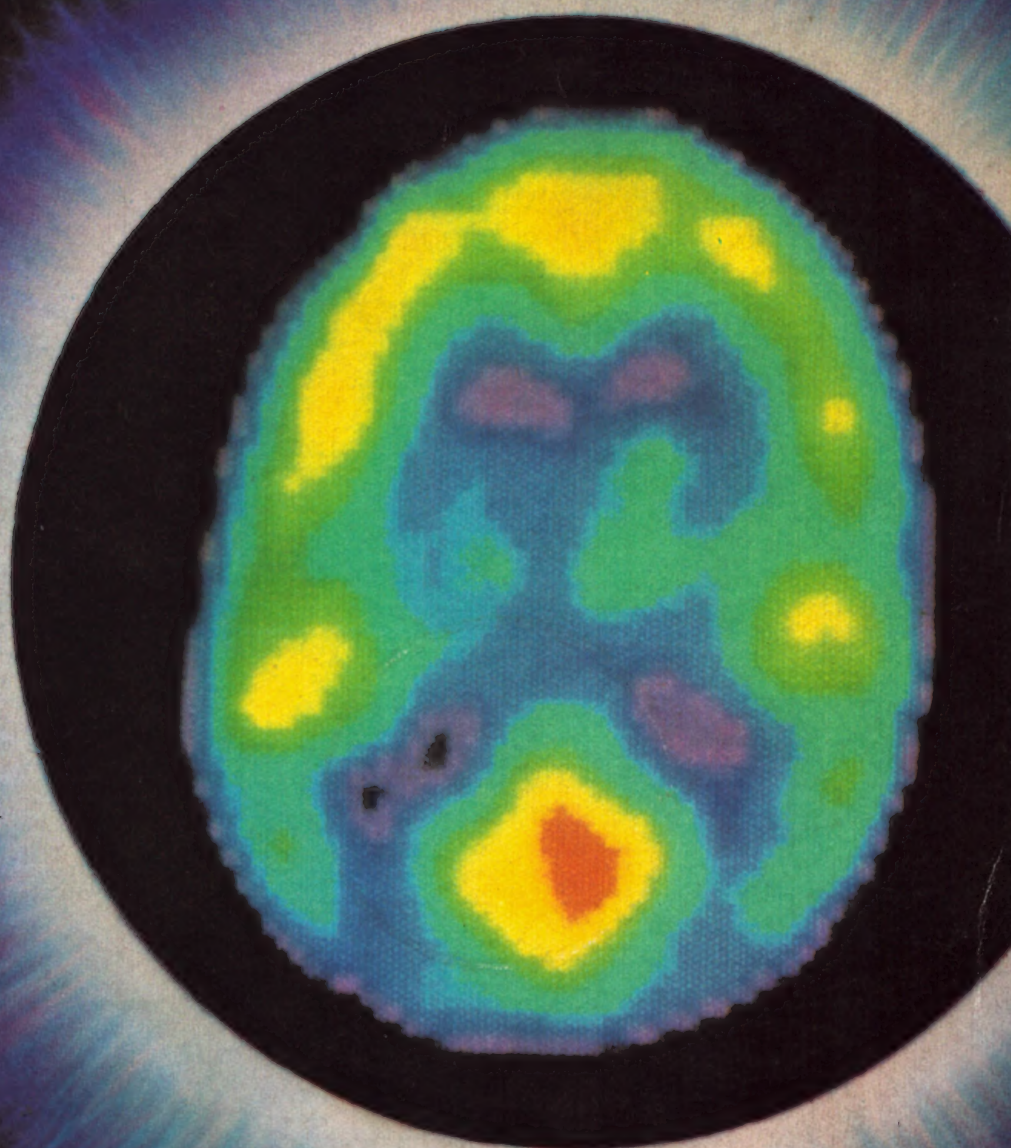
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THE Unexplained

MYSTERIES OF MIND SPACE & TIME

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In next week's issue

We recount the intriguing life of a master of Elizabethan occultism, **John Dee**. Did he really communicate with angelic spirits – or was he a victim of deception practised by a cunning medium? We begin a new series on the mysteries of **Glastonbury**. Claims for it having been a religious centre of pagan Britain and the resting place of King Arthur are among the many tales about this magical site. In **Divination** we explain how to interpret the Tarot cards, their history and, indeed, how the cards seem to understand us. In **Mysterious man-beasts** a theory for the origin of the Minnesota iceman is proposed. In another new series we look at a man who became famous for his work in bringing psychical research – and himself – to the attention of the public: **Harry Price**.

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Experience, so most of us believe, leaves its mark on us as a memory stored inside the brain. But is this really the case? RUPERT SHELDRAKE analyses the evidence – and comes up with a startling new theory

WE ARE ALL BROUGHT UP to believe that memories are stored inside the brain. It is an old and respectable idea, and many of us may not even think of questioning it. Nevertheless, it may be open to doubt.

The idea that memories are stored inside the brain is known as the trace theory of memory. One of its earliest versions was put forward by Aristotle. He compared memory to impressions left on soft wax by experience: the sealing wax and the impressions left upon it, and the persistence of these impressions in the wax, provided an analogy of the process of memory.

Since Aristotle, this same trace theory has been repeatedly modified in accordance with the latest advances in technology to provide more and more up-to-date analogies. Currently most popular is the theory that memory is stored in the brain in the same way as is the information contained in a hologram (see page 1464). This is a sophisticated version of the trace theory, but nevertheless it is essentially the same theory.

The trace theory applies to long-term memory – memories that last over a long period. There is another kind of memory,

How does memory work? Study of the human brain (below) has so far failed to reveal the answer, although many theories have been put forward. One of the most widely accepted is that memories are laid down in the brain in the same way as music is 'stored' in the grooves of a gramophone record (right). Much experimental work has been done in an attempt to locate these 'memory traces', or 'engrams'; so far, however, they have been unsuccessful



Memories are made of this?



Mind and brain

short-term memory – the kind of memory you have when you look up a number in the telephone directory. You remember the number for as long as it takes you to dial it, and then immediately forget it. It is possible that short-term memory is explicable in terms of a kind of reverberation in the brain's neural circuits. It is long-term memory that presents us with problems.

The hypothesis of formative causation (see page 1141) suggests one possible answer.

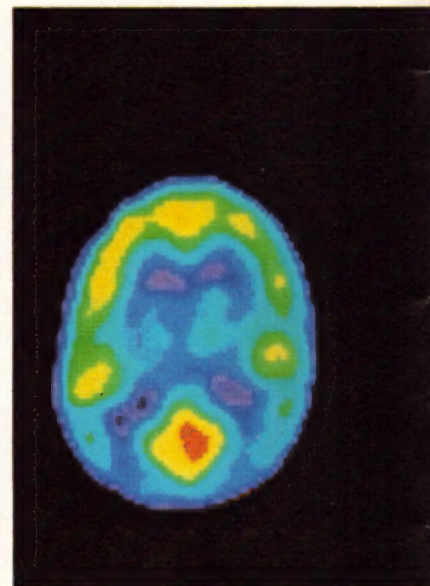
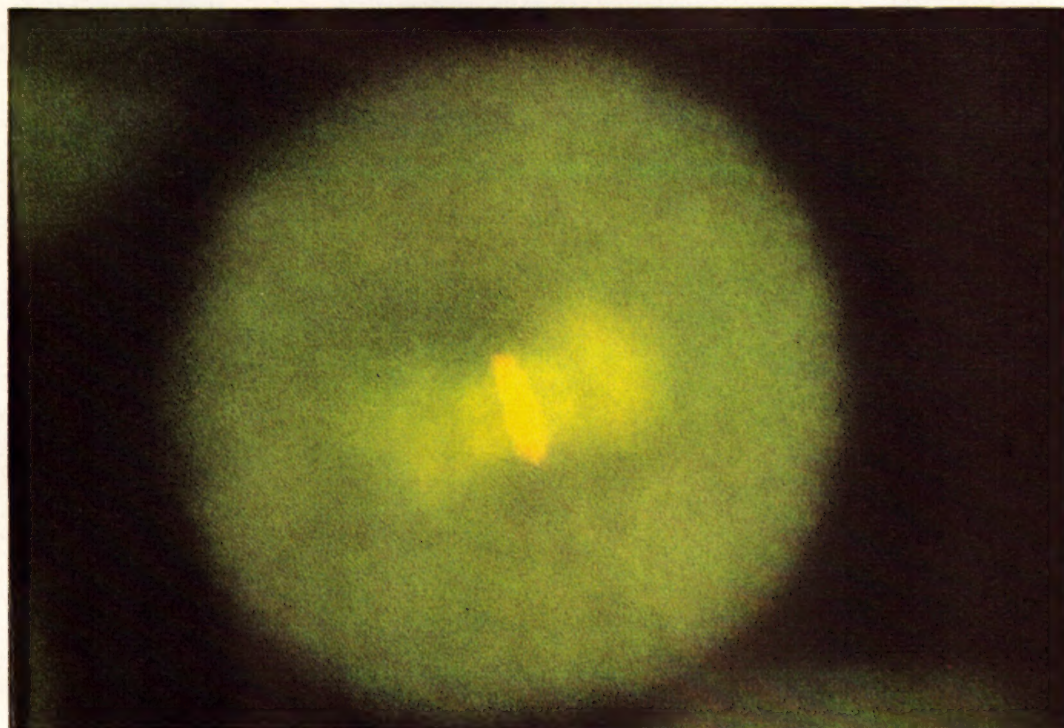
According to this theory, the development of form in living creatures is governed by a morphogenetic field – a kind of biological field that can, by a process called morphic resonance, be 'tuned in' to by *other* members of the same species and so influence their development. This hypothesis can explain memory. If organisms enter into morphic resonance with previous organisms of the same species on the basis of similarity, then there is a very interesting consequence, for the thing that an organism resembles most

provide conclusive and overwhelming evidence for the existence of memory traces, and that lead to the unquestioning acceptance of the idea that memories are stored inside the brain.

The more important of these is the evidence from brain damage – that various types of brain damage can lead to loss of memory. A standard interpretation of this is that the damage has removed those parts of the brain tissue that contain the memory traces. But this is not the only possible interpretation. To see the fallacy in the argument, take the analogy of a television set. If you were to damage a television set by cutting out part of the wiring or removing a few transistors and condensers, and completely lost reception of one channel as a result, you would not automatically assume that this proved that all the people – actors, musicians, announcers – you saw on the programmes of that channel were contained within the condensers and transistors that you had removed. And yet, if

As a result of hydrocephalus – water on the brain – Sharon Scruton (right) has a huge cavity at the centre of her brain; yet she has had a successful school career.

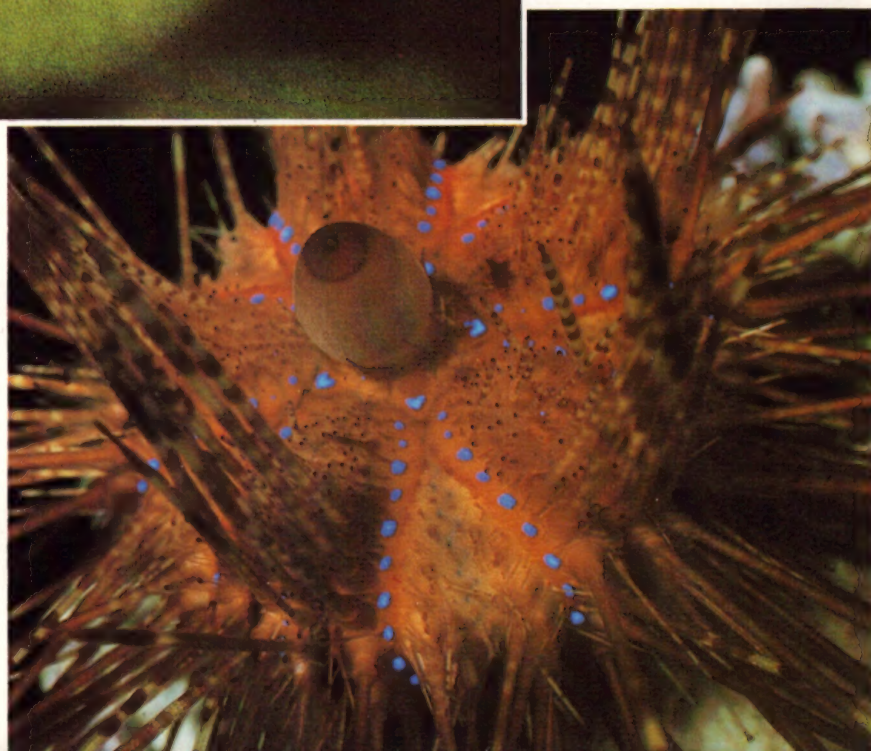
Using a technique known as positron emission tomograph – PET – scanning, it is now possible to identify areas of brain activity; these scans (below) show the brain in 'rest state' (left) and exposed to language and music (right). A PET scan of Sharon Scruton's brain reveals that activities that normally take place at the centre of the brain now occur at the peripheries – indicating that specific brain activities are not necessarily linked to specific areas of the brain



closely in the past is itself. Although it is obvious that the development of individual living things is not governed simply by their own forms in the past, we nevertheless have the fascinating possibility that organisms may be subject to morphic resonance from their own past states.

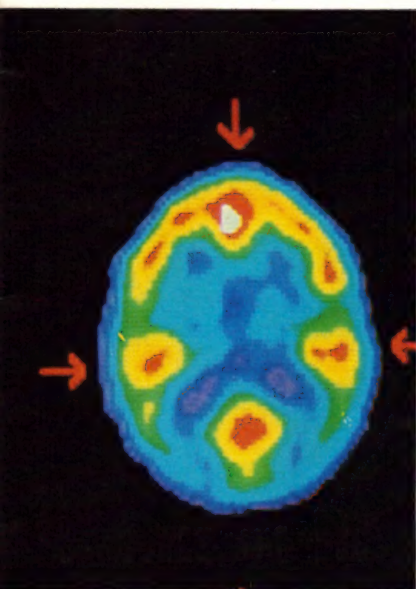
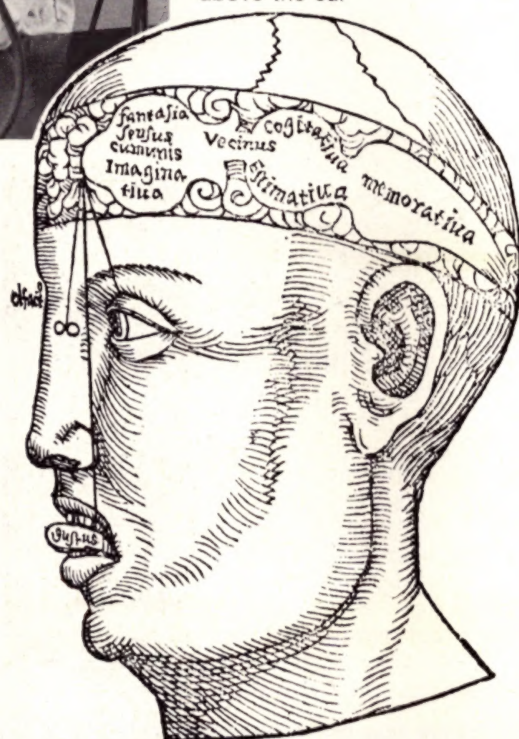
Memory may consist of a kind of tuning in to the past states of our own organism through the process of morphic resonance – so that the past is, as it were, continuously present to us. Thus, according to this theory, it is not necessary to suppose that memory traces are stored inside the brain.

Why do we take the trace theory of memory for granted? There are two pieces of evidence that, for many people, seem to





Below: early scientists, from Aristotle onwards, believed that memory was physically located in the brain. This illustration from *Margarita philosophica* by Gregor Reisch, published in Heidelberg in 1504, shows the seat of memory just above the ear



Above left: cells dividing in a sea-urchin's egg, and (left) a fully grown sea-urchin. The development of living creatures, so the accepted theory goes, is governed by a complex chemical, deoxyribonucleic acid – DNA – that is present in every cell. But how does this explain the different ways in which different cells develop – into forms as varied as the sea-urchin's spikes and its luminous blue 'eyes'? A new hypothesis suggests, instead, that living creatures receive their form by 'tuning in' to a 'morphogenetic field' that contains information about the past members of their species

you were embedded in that way of thinking, you might easily think so. And you might think you had proved you were right when you saw that, when you replaced the parts you had removed, the channel reappeared. Loss of memory through brain damage does not prove in any way that memory is stored inside the brain. It merely proves that a normal brain is essential for the effective recall of these memories. It is possible that the effects of brain damage on memory can be explained in terms of the loss of the ability to recall or tune in to past states of the brain. Thus the evidence from brain damage on memory is ambiguous.

A second piece of evidence often cited in favour of the trace theory of memory is the well-known work of Wilder Penfield on the electrical stimulation of the brain tissue of epileptic patients. He found that this enabled some patients to recall particular scenes from their past life with great vividness – the

electrical stimulation seemed to be reawakening memories. The most obvious interpretation of this result is that the memories must be embedded in the tissue that is stimulated, or near it, and that the electric current somehow reawakens them. This is very often taken as evidence for the trace theory. But again, it is quite inconclusive. Think of the television analogy. If you were to apply electric currents to the tuning circuits inside a television set, you would find some very strange things happening – jumps from channel to channel, possibly, and distortions of the picture. But this does not prove that the figures you see on the television screen are actually located inside the television, any more than in the previous analogy.

Further objections spring from the nature of the trace theory itself. First, it is extremely vague – although the traces are taken for granted, their nature is still very much a matter of dispute in the scientific community. One popular and well-established theory suggests that memories may depend on reverberating circuits of electrical activity in the brain – loops of electrical current within the brain tissue.

Another theory, which was much in vogue during the early 1970s, is the idea that memory is stored in the complex molecules of ribonucleic acid (RNA), a substance that is similar to DNA (see page 1141). The memory traces are, according to this theory, in some unspecified way laid down inside these molecules. This theory has rather gone out of fashion because there is very little evidence to support it, and it is not yet clear how a chemical inside the brain, or a set of chemicals, can fulfil as complex a function as the encoding of memory.

Making connections

The third and most popular of theories of memory is that of synaptic modification. The synapses are the connections between the nerve cells, and the idea is that they somehow become modified as electric pulses – nerve signals – pass through them, making it more likely that the same signals will pass through them again. This is similar to the hydraulic theory of memory proposed by the philosopher and scientist René Descartes (1596-1650). Descartes suggested that memory depended on the flow of fluids through pores. The more often the fluid flowed, the more it would enlarge the pores, making it easy for the fluid to flow in that direction again.

The main evidence for the theory of synaptic modification comes from a series of experiments carried out on a species of snail, *Aplysia*. This snail has exceptionally large nerves, which are therefore easy to study, and it reacts in simple ways to simple stimuli: if you go on prodding it with a needle, for example, it gets used to it after a while and, instead of withdrawing into its shell, it simply ignores it – if, that is, it has established that the stimulus is harmless. This

Mind and brain

is a well-known kind of learning known as habituation, whereby animals simply ignore stimuli that do not threaten them.

Some very detailed and very elegant experimental work has shown that changes occur in the synapses of *Aplysia* during the process of habituation – but the reason for these changes is still unclear. There is no reason to think that the same kind of change can possibly account for the many and complex kinds of learning that take place in the higher organisms. The evidence shows there certainly are, in some cases, changes in the brain during learning – but can these changes explain the phenomenon of memory?

The most damning piece of evidence against the trace theory of memory comes from a series of experiments carried out by K.S. Lashley. He set out with the hypothesis that if memory traces did indeed exist in the brain, it should be possible to locate them. The idea was to cut out portions of the brain and identify the bits of memory that disappeared. He spent a great deal of time doing this and after many years ended up completely frustrated with this line of research. In this passage from an article entitled 'In search of the engram' – engram meaning memory trace – Lashley summarised the work as follows:

It is not possible to demonstrate the isolated localization of the memory trace anywhere within the nervous system. Limited regions may be essential for learning or retention of a particular activity, but within such regions the parts are functionally equivalent.

Lashley's experiments were on rats, and he found that loss of memory occurred only when large portions of the brain were removed. The loss of memory was proportional to the *amount* of nervous tissue removed, rather than its location. Lashley

called this the law of mass action – the idea that it was the mass of tissue removed that was important, not the specific bits. The experiment was repeated with octopuses and the same results were reached – you could cut out bits of the octopus brain, and the loss of memory was proportional to the mass removed, rather than which portion of the brain it was taken from.

The brain as hologram?

Clearly, all attempts to find localised traces within the brain have failed. This, of course, has posed great difficulties for the trace theory of memory, which had earlier seemed quite straightforward. This is the main reason why the holographic theory of memory was developed – a modification that suggested that there are, indeed, memory traces, but they are spread all over the brain so that if you cut parts of it out you won't make much difference, since all the memories are localised everywhere. This theory, clear though it seems, is obscurantist – for, in preserving the idea that memories are located inside the brain, the hypothesis has become almost impossible to test. The brain, after all, is not a hologram. The hologram works on the principle of laser light waves and interference patterns stored on photographic film. There is nothing of the sort in the set-up of the brain.

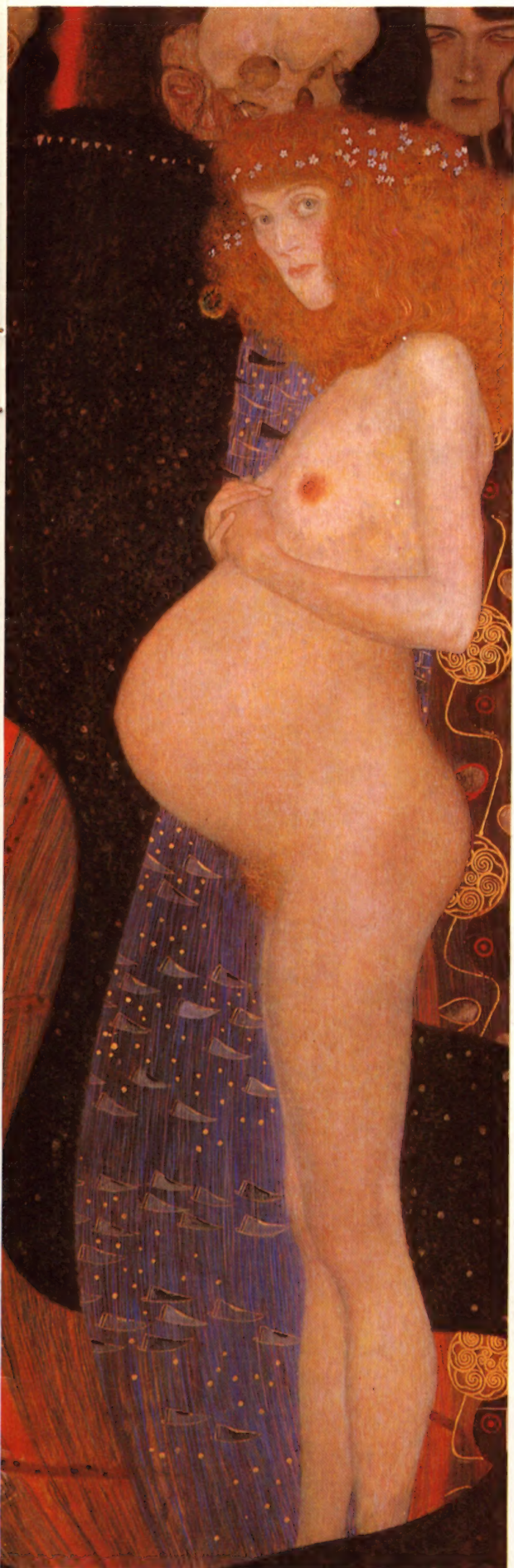
This is the present state of research into memory. The idea that memory traces are stored inside the brain is really an aspect of the mechanistic theory of life. It all stems from the theory that everything to do with the mind is explicable in terms of matter, and is reducible to things inside the brain. If you share this conviction, then you *have* to believe that memories are inside the brain.

However, when you consider the possibility that the brain may not be a memory



The 17th-century philosopher René Descartes (above) proposed a hydraulic theory of memory in which he suggested that memory was dependent on the flow of liquid through pores: the more often the liquid flowed in a certain direction, the more likely it was that it would flow in that direction again. A more modern version is synaptic modification, which suggests that the synapses, or connections between the nerve cells – contained in the knobs, magnified 5000 times, in this photograph (left) – become modified as nerve signals pass through them, making it more likely that the same signals will pass through them again





Above: the marine snail *Aplysia punctata*. The main evidence for the theory of synaptic modification comes from study of this snail, which shows changes in its synapses after undergoing a simple learning process

Left: *Hope I*, by Gustav Klimt (1862–1918): a pregnant woman stands surrounded by disturbing and phantasmagorical shapes. Could it be that, through our morphogenetic fields, our thoughts and actions influence human beings, as yet unborn, whom we shall never meet?

storage device, but rather a tuning system that enables memories to be picked up, this failure to find localised memory traces in the brain makes sense. And, startlingly, several hitherto unexplained phenomena may begin to seem less surprising from a scientific point of view.

According to the new theory, we normally 'tune in' to our own memories – but it is conceivable that the process of morphic resonance may allow us to tune in to *other people's*. Telepathy can be explained as the almost instantaneous transfer of very recent memories; clairvoyance could be the result of tuning into the memories of distant people. And there is also, of course, the possibility of tuning in to memories from the distant past. This could be one way of explaining the evidence that people can have access to memories of past lives, often through hypnotic regression (see page 54). It could even explain why many of the 'memories' produced under hypnotic regression are patchy, or seem to be the result of the overlapping of memories of entirely distinct lives. This could perhaps be the result of tuning in to more than one morphogenetic field at the same time, and jumbling the information received in this way.

The new concept of memory as an aspect of morphic resonance also lends theoretical support to the well-known notion of the collective unconscious put forward by the psychologist C.G. Jung (see page 426). We may be influenced not only by memories of particular people in the past, but also by a sort of pooled or collective memory from countless previous human beings – a sort of species memory. Rather than existing separately, our minds may be influenced directly by other people, including countless people in the past, through the interconnectedness of memory – whether we realise it or not. In turn, our own thoughts and memories may be adding to the collective memory of mankind, and persist to influence future members of the human race.

Further reading

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Lost for words

Were Voirrey Irving and Gef, the talking mongoose, one and the same? Were she and her family in a game of deception together? If so, what did they hope to gain?

MELVIN HARRIS analyses the affair that left the researchers baffled and the public entertained

THE INVESTIGATION BY Harry Price and R.S. Lambert of the talking mongoose of Doarlish Cashen ended after three days, for the amazing Gef failed to speak or display himself. Jim Irving, whose home the creature 'haunted', explained this away by saying that Gef had 'gone missing' some weeks before. So the investigators departed, feeling thwarted and baffled – for the Irvings had seemed to live up to their reputation as level-headed and sincere people.

They left behind a new camera for Irving's daughter Voirrey, but they took away some hairs from the collie dog Mona – samples they had secretly snipped off.

As soon as the two researchers had left the island, Gef reappeared – or so Irving said. And to make up for his temperamental vanishing act, Gef now promised to provide imprints of his paws. Price took up the offer and received three 'paw impressions' made in plasticine. These welcome exhibits were photographed and the prints, marked A, B and C, were given to R.I. Pocock, FRS, at the Natural History Museum in London.

Pocock's opinion of 5 October 1935 was that impression A did not represent the footprint of any animal known to him 'except possibly a raccoon, an American animal'. Impression B had no connection with A, but 'conceivably it was made by a dog'. Impression C had no possible connection with B, for: 'There is no mammal in which there is such

disparity in the size of the fore and hind foot.' He concluded: 'I must add that I do not believe these photographs represent foot tracks at all. Most certainly none of them was made by a mongoose.'

Meanwhile, Mona's hair had been given to F. Martin Duncan, who had examined specimens of 'Gef's fur' earlier and had suggested that Price get samples from Voirrey's dog. Duncan's conclusion was unequivocal. He wrote '...your sample on examination is absolutely identical with the alleged "mongoose hairs"...they all came from the same animal – the dog – and not from any "mongoose".' Along with his report, he sent photomicrographs and detailed drawings showing the unmistakable identity of the two batches of hair. So much for the only tangible evidence.

One last visit by Captain Macdonald, who was investigating at Harry Price's request, also failed to provide anything substantially new. Even fresh snapshots by Voirrey were

Right: three paw prints and some teeth marks (bottom right) said to belong to Gef, the talking mongoose of the Isle of Man. A scientist at London's Natural History Museum discredited them

Below right: some of the myriad documents in the file on Gef at the Society for Psychical Research. Gef's antics enlivened the media for several years in the early 1930s



Left: Voirrey and Jim Irving with R.S. Lambert, who investigated their claims about the talking mongoose with Harry Price. Lambert got into trouble with his employer, the BBC, over his part in the matter

Below: the desolate hilltop where the affair of the talking mongoose was played out





of no value, since they simply showed something that could have been an out-of-focus fur collar.

Dr Nandor Fodor was another psychical researcher who looked into the 'Gef' phenomenon thoroughly. At the end of his extensive research on the Isle of Man, he could not come to any conclusion as to what Gef was.

There were four possibilities, as he saw it. One was that Gef was a poltergeist, centring on Voirrey. The second was that Gef was a ghost, haunting the house itself and unconnected to the Irvings. The third was that the elusive animal was a sort of 'familiar', a survival from the days of witchcraft. The final proposition was that Gef was indeed an animal. Fodor reluctantly decided in favour of the animal theory, remarking that 'All the evidence is in favour of Gef being a talking animal. I cannot prove he is an animal. I have not seen him. He did not talk to me. He claimed to be an animal. I cannot disprove that claim.'

Gef permitted Voirrey to take some pictures of him on a five-barred gate, about 300 yards (275 metres) from the house. None of these pictures was of even passable quality though, as Fodor records, 'some of them are distinct enough to show a small animal very much like a mongoose'. The pictures are shadowy and blurred, but a case can be made for Fodor's opinion.

However, the saddest part of the story is that Fodor was given the opportunity to photograph Gef, but he bungled it. What he did was to set up a kitchen scale and train Voirrey's camera at it, with a flashlight so fixed that if Gef could be persuaded to climb on the scale, he would take his own picture. Eventually the mongoose did agree to explode the flash in this way – but the image did not develop properly because of the inexpert way in which the apparatus had been set up. By using make-shift equipment for such an important experiment, Fodor muffed one of the finest opportunities given to a psychic investigator.

In the end the case just petered out, and the Irvings moved away.

So what lay behind the strange and colourful antics of the talking mongoose? Some of the earliest explanations considered Gef as a psychic phenomenon. The most curious psychical interpretation was advanced by the medium Florence Hodgkin in *Light* magazine of 3 June 1937. She claimed to have received an astonishing communication from a Lama about 'a race of people, actually in existence and living on the Earth at this moment, of whom the world has never heard. They are highly developed, cultured and so advanced that their animals have attained speech.' Gef apparently was an advance emissary, for Florence Hodgkin insisted:

The Irving family 'know'... That action fought so recently in our Courts of Law [see box] was a means of





Richard Stanton Lambert was the editor of the BBC publication the *Listener* at the time that he helped Harry Price to investigate Gef, the talking mongoose – and he came to some grief over his part in the affair. For, after writing about Gef, he found himself under attack by Sir Cecil Levita, a former chairman of the London County Council.

Thought, word and deed

Sir Cecil went to the Assistant Programme Controller at the BBC, Gladstone Murray, and complained about Lambert's involvement in the occult. Words like 'unstable' and 'hysterical' were bandied about with regard to Lambert's character.

Fearing that his job was in jeopardy, Lambert brought a libel action against Sir Cecil. The trial came up on 4 November 1936 and Lambert was represented by the eminent barrister, Sir Patrick Hastings, KC. In summing up the case, Sir Patrick declared, 'Sir Cecil was saying in terms: this man is cracked. He has got to go, and if you, Mr Gladstone Murray, do not yourself go to the BBC and get Mr Lambert removed, I will go to them myself.'

The court found in Lambert's favour and awarded him what were then record damages. But it did not end there. The case caused a sensation and led to questions in Parliament and the setting up of a Parliamentary Board of Enquiry into relationships between the BBC and its staff. This in turn led to reforms within the BBC.

Not bad going for a mongoose – real or imaginary, talking or not.

broadcasting in a very real sense this stupendous and unbelievable fact. Irrefutable proof will be forthcoming shortly, because, as the Lama says, 'The time is coming for such a revelation.'

Such a revelation not having come, the talking mongoose affair makes sense only when viewed as a family fantasy.

To understand the background to this case, imagine what it was like living in that sombre, windswept farmhouse. There was no electricity, no television, no radio – not even a next-door neighbour. So the family was thrown in on itself, spending every evening together in gloomy rooms. This probably exaggerated their character traits.

Now, every child lives in a wonderland at times. Many create imaginary playmates who are talked to as if they were flesh and blood. In Voirrey's case, she seems to have created an exotic animal playmate with human capabilities, a mischievous schoolgirl wit, and a moody personality.

But why a mongoose? Well, it so happens that mongooses were once found in the very area that the Irvings lived in. In 1912, a farmer imported dozens of them and let them loose to cut down the rabbit population. That farmer's name was Irvine.

Voirrey could hardly have escaped hearing of Irvine's mongooses. And from there it was only one step to thinking about Irving's mongoose. Her very own unusual pet. A chatty little creature that would prowl the

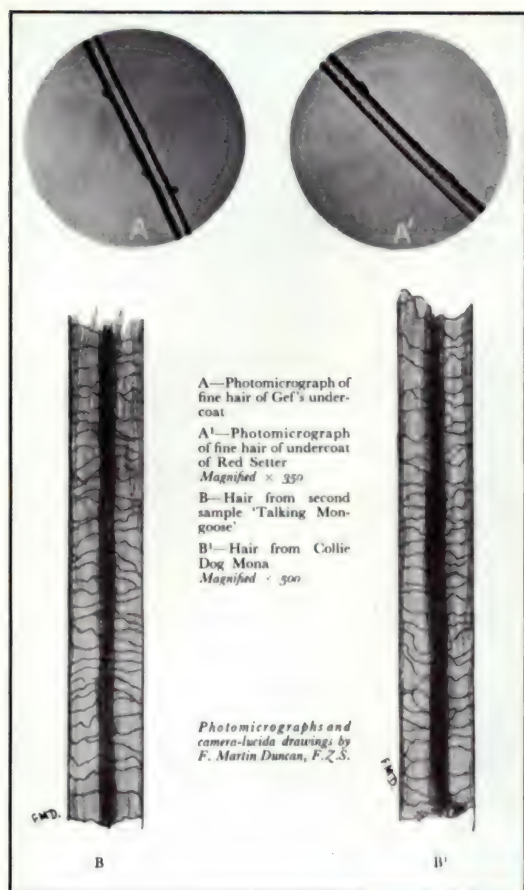
deadly-dull farmhouse and bring it to life. An exhaustive examination of the documents in this case leads logically to the conclusion that Voirrey and Gef were one and the same. Indeed, one of the earliest newspaper accounts already proposed that the solution to the mystery lay in 'the dual personality' of Voirrey (see page 1922).

Gef never had a personality or existence independent of Voirrey. He brought home rabbits, as did Voirrey. His favourite foods were also Voirrey's favourites. He shared her strong interests in mechanical things. Moreover, Gef was never heard unless Voirrey was out of the room or so placed that her mouth could not be watched. The voice itself was described by one observer, who believed in Gef, as 'like a girl's voice of about 15 or 16 – a striking penetrating voice.' In other words, just the sort of voice Voirrey could easily assume.

It is true that some visitors had difficulty in spotting where Gef's voice came from, but that is not surprising. For the inside walls of the house were covered in boarding to keep out the cold, and these boards were fixed so that they stood some 5 inches (13 centimetres) away from the stone walls. As one reporter observed, 'It cannot be emphasised too much that the interior of the house resembles, in a way, a wooden drum.' Price similarly described the walls as acting like a 'vast speaking tube, with panels like drum-heads'. By speaking against these panels, or into one of the many cracks and knotholes, it

Below: Rikki-Tikki-Tavi, the clever and engaging mongoose of Kipling's *The jungle book*. Voirrey Irving was known to be an avid reader of books about animals. If she was Gef's creator, as suspected, maybe she read about, and was inspired by, the storybook mongoose





A—Photomicrograph of fine hair of Gef's undercoat

A'—Photomicrograph of fine hair of undercoat of Red Setter
Magnified $\times 350$

B—Hair from second sample 'Talking Mongoose'

B'—Hair from Collie Dog Mona
Magnified $\times 500$

Photomicrographs and camera-lucida drawings by F. Martin Duncan, F.Z.S.

Enlarged photographs (top) and detailed drawings (above) showed the sample of 'Gef's fur' (right) to be that of Mona (above right), Voirrey's pet dog. The analysis was made by an expert at the Zoological Society of London

Further reading

Hereward Carrington and Nandor Fodor, *The story of the poltergeist down the centuries*, Rider 1953
Nandor Fodor, *Between two worlds*, Parker (West Nyack) 1964
Harry Price and R.S. Lambert, *The haunting of Cashen's Gap*, Methuen 1936
Paul Tabori, *The talking tree*, Samson Low 1950



was easy to project the voice and conceal its true point of origin.

But if Voirrey was indeed Gef, why did her parents go along with the deception? It is not unreasonable to assume that they were caught up in the masquerade and became accomplices. Indeed, Jim Irving became so involved that he 'became obsessed with the thing'. He would speak for hours, telling and retelling the saga to anyone who would listen. Price said that Irving spoke about Gef for two hours in his presence and, in that time, his recital 'invariably coincided (almost word for word) with what had been recorded in the letters [he] sent'.

It may well be that Irving came to need the

diversion more than Voirrey – to the point of forcing it to continue beyond its natural life. For, as Nandor Fodor noted, appearances in the Irving household were deceptive. Margaret Irving was not the dominant partner she seemed to be. The kingpin of the household was Jim Irving, under whose bland personality Fodor spotted that 'a tyrannical personality arose... the family never dared to challenge his autocratic rule.' Fodor summed Irving up as 'a man who failed in life... whose passions were too strong to bear this failure with resignation.'

So Irving was a man desperately needing fame of some kind – and promoting Gef made him notorious in his twilight years. Perhaps it was even the high point of his whole life. The publicity, the collecting of anecdotes, the storytelling: all these were Irving's responsibility – and his pride. He constantly interpreted Gef's speech for visitors. Half the time they weren't sure if they had heard the words for themselves or had picked up Irving's translation.

Surprise appearance

His role as an interpreter is clearly shown in the account written for the *Listener* by J. Radcliffe of the *Isle of Man Examiner*. He visited Doarlish Cashen with his father and some friends, but when Gef stayed silent, they left. On the doorstep they chatted for a while. Then:

Suddenly there was a shrill squeak from the corner of the room where Voirrey, the daughter, was sitting, and Mr Irving in great excitement gripped my arm and pointing to the opposite side of the room whispered: 'He's there! Did you hear him?' Evans and I gazed at each other in sheer amazement. . . . We were again conducted to the door and the squeaks at intermittent intervals continued. Each squeak was kindly translated by Mr Irving to mean: 'They don't believe' or 'I want to back a horse', etc. The squeak in every case was of particularly short duration. . . . On our way down I noticed Voirrey had a tendency to hang behind, and once again we heard a piping squeak with Mr Irving again wildly gesticulating and pointing to the hedge and whispering: 'He's there, I tell you. He's there.' This was really too much, for my hearing is very good, and the squeak without doubt was human and came from immediately behind us. We laughed over the whole incident for days. . . because it was so badly done that it was extremely funny.

And laughter is surely the best response to the 'talking mongoose mystery' – for it was never a malicious affair and it provided a good deal of amusement and excitement. For those who cannot accept this verdict, perhaps Gef himself had the answer when he shrieked: 'Nuts! Put a sock in it! Chew coke!'

The Minnesota iceman mystery

Frozen in a block of ice, an 'apeman' is on display in the fairgrounds of small-town America. PETER COSTELLO asks whether this is a Hollywood model-maker's fake – or, as expert witnesses insisted, a genuine mystery creature

IN LATE 1968 DR BERNARD HEUVELMANS, a Belgian zoologist who had long specialised in investigating mysterious animals, stumbled on an extraordinary find. As he wrote in a letter at the time, it was something that 'will certainly crown my career as a crypto-zoologist, the discovery of a specimen of an unknown form of living Hominoid. This time it was not just a film showing a faked Abominable Snowman.'

But heated controversy followed his announcement of the find a few weeks later. The facts were obscured by lies and unfounded allegations. The true story, one of the most bizarre in the chronicles of modern science, has never been told before for English-language readers.

The investigations that Heuvelmans had carried out into reports of the giant squid, the yeti, sea serpents and other creatures had earned him the reputation of being the Sherlock Holmes of zoology. He had been in the United States since October 1968 to promote a new book dealing with the sea serpent and other marine monsters. He had intended to go on to central America on the trail of more creatures new to science. But this new find detained him.

In early December Heuvelmans was staying with the zoologist and writer Ivan T. Sanderson at his farm in New Jersey. They were old friends and had supported each other's researches for many years. Sanderson was well-known in the United States as an expert on the yeti and the bigfoot – enthusiasms that had made professional scientists wary of him.

On 9 December Sanderson received a call from a snake dealer in Milwaukee named Terry Cullen, telling him about a curious fairground exhibit that he had recently seen. It was some kind of 'hairy man' and the showman displaying it claimed the creature was the real 'missing link' between human beings and apes.

Sanderson traced the showman. His name was Frank Hansen and he lived on a farm at Rollingstone, near Winona, Minnesota. He



Above: the 'apeman' is viewed by thousands of Americans every year. According to one account, it was found floating at sea, encased in ice

Left: the creature as reconstructed from the photographs and drawings of the zoologists Ivan T. Sanderson and Bernard Heuvelmans. The creature resembled no known living human race

Right: Sanderson and Heuvelmans stated that 'the creature is somewhat pug-faced, the tip of the nose turning upwards . . . the forehead is sloping . . . the mouth is slit-like . . .'



was contacted by telephone and arrangements were made to view his exhibit for what Sanderson called 'professional reasons'. (Sanderson owned a small private zoo, and the exhibit could be represented as of interest to him without mention of the fact that he was also an investigator.)

Sanderson was the 'science editor' of *Argosy* magazine – in which, however, science surfaces only in its more sensational forms. The magazine agreed to finance an investigative jaunt, and Heuvelmans and Sanderson drove nearly halfway across the continent, arriving at Hansen's farm on 17 December. The place was cold and bleak in the depths of winter.

Parked near the farmhouse was a trailer. In the trailer was a large freezer cabinet, and inside that, to the astonishment of the two visitors, was what appeared to be a creature unknown to science. It looked like a man covered in long brown hair.

Space inside the trailer was limited. But for 11 hours each day for the next three days, Sanderson and Heuvelmans toiled to draw and photograph the creature. It was about 5 feet 10 inches (1.8 metres) tall. Sanderson had to lie on the glass top of the freezer in order to draw the 'man', one part at a time.



Using an Asahi reflex camera, Heuvelmans found that, although oblique views of the creature were easy enough, he could photograph it from above only by making four separate exposures.

The creature was hairless on the face and groin. Testicles and a narrow penis were visible, leaving no doubt about its sex at least. The creature's left arm was thrown up above its face and was obviously broken. One eye socket was empty and the eyeball of the other had been pushed out and lay on the cheekbone. The back of the head seemed to have been shattered. This was clear, bloody evidence that the creature had been shot through the head, vainly defending itself from attack with its arm.

The blood was clearly visible to the scientists. They could detect, too, the distinctive sweet smell of decomposition. On one foot, visible through the ice, they could see the grey-tinged evidence of rotting flesh. They mentioned this to Hansen, who was disturbed by the news.

Origin in ice

The two experienced zoologists had no doubts as they worked that the curious object of their interest in the ice block had been recently alive. But where had it come from? On this point Hansen was vague and self-contradictory, telling now one story, now another. Sanderson and Heuvelmans gathered that the specimen had come from the Far East, though it was never clear exactly where. At one point Hansen said it had been found floating in an ice block in the sea off eastern Siberia. A 'dealer' in Hong Kong was also mentioned.

Hansen claimed that he was not the owner of the exhibit. It belonged, he said, to a wealthy man in California. This mysterious mogul was never to be identified. Hansen wanted neither publicity nor an in-depth investigation of the creature, and he got Ivan Sanderson to agree not to publish anything about what he had seen. But Heuvelmans was careful not to make such a promise. As a scientist his first duty was to making the truth known.

Their work finished, Sanderson and Heuvelmans returned to New Jersey, where they separately set down their impressions. In summary they read as follows. The creature's torso was broad and muscular. Apart from its hairy coat, the most remarkable feature was its upturned nose, which gave it a pug-like appearance. The legs were short, and the feet were broad and flat. The big toe lay alongside the small second toe, as it does in human beings – there was no gap, as there is in other primates.

Heuvelmans drafted a scientific note. His photographs, both colour and black and white, had come out very well. Now, with all this evidence to hand, what should the two researchers do next?

If this remarkable discovery were to be



shot, he became alarmed at the prospect of some kind of police investigation.

Sanderson had indeed contacted the FBI in New Jersey on 18 January. But they were not interested; such a killing is murder, it seems, only when it is inflicted on *Homo sapiens*.

On 11 March 1969 the first press report appeared, in a Belgian newspaper. Within days journalists all over the world were pursuing the story. Two days later the Smithsonian, prompted by Dr Napier, officially requested Frank Hansen's co-operation in an investigation of the creature. Although Dr Napier had known about the discovery for well over a month, he had not taken the opportunity to travel to Minnesota to see the specimen for himself. Now it was too late. Harassed by the press and the scientists, Hansen panicked; he and the iceman disappeared.

The press sensation that followed was farcical. Heuvelmans had been anxious to set a high tone by having his photographs published in a reputable journal, such as *Life*, *Look* or *National Geographic* magazine. But he failed: the photographs finally appeared with an article by Ivan Sanderson in *Argosy* in May 1969. Sanderson had infelicitously nicknamed the specimen 'Bozo' after a well-known television clown. This levity influenced the press treatment: no one in America could take *Homo pongoides* seriously when it was named after a clown.

This sort of approach marred much of Sanderson's work at this time. Heuvelmans had been dismayed to find that his friend could hardly utter a sentence that was not a gross exaggeration. The scientists in America that they had been hoping to interest in the find were only too well-aware of Ivan Sanderson's peculiarities. Many must have suspected a hoax from the very

fully investigated, they would need to arouse the interest of the scientific community. On 4 January 1969 they drove over to Massachusetts to see an eminent anthropologist, Professor Carleton S. Coon. He, a man of the widest experience and learning, was impressed by their evidence. He agreed with Heuvelmans that the creature appeared to be manlike, from what they could tell him of the visible features. He wished them well, but did not feel that he could give them great support. He was already embroiled in public controversy because of his racial views.

On 14 January Heuvelmans sent his note to the head of the Belgian Royal Museum. He now boldly named the specimen *Homo pongoides*: the pongids are the anthropoid apes, and Heuvelmans was thus declaring the creature to be an ape-like man. The note was received at the museum with great enthusiasm, and arrangements were made to publish it within a month. This promptness was a mark of the esteem in which Heuvelmans was held in Europe and the importance with which his colleagues there regarded his discovery.

Heuvelmans also sent English versions of his note to W.C. Osman-Hill at the Yerkes Regional Primate Center in Atlanta, Georgia, and to Dr John Napier at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC, the leading scientific institution in the United States. Napier was intrigued by the news. He was the first to use the term 'iceman'. Heuvelmans hated this kind of journalistic nickname, 'which tends to ridicule the most serious problems'. But it was as the 'Minnesota iceman' that the creature was to become widely known.

Hansen was upset when he heard about the publication of Heuvelmans's scientific report. Hearing that the creature was being referred to in this official-sounding context as a man and, moreover, a man who had been

Above: Bernard Heuvelmans, Belgian 'cryptozoologist', or student of mystery animals. He was convinced of the authenticity of the iceman and coined the name *Homo pongoides* for it

Below: Ivan T. Sanderson, seen here testing a geological specimen. His sensationalist approach to scientific subjects damaged his reputation with many researchers





start. The bizarre changes in Sanderson's personality were explained when in 1973 he died of a brain tumour.

Suspicious of a hoax seemed to be confirmed by an anonymous revelation that the iceman was a model that had been made in a Hollywood monster factory. The hair, it was alleged, had been implanted by one Pete Corral, a professional model-maker.

Then, after a month's 'vacation', Hansen himself reappeared and said that this was indeed the case: his exhibit was a model. Photographers and journalists flocked to see it and interview Hansen.

While on his 'vacation' Hansen had defrosted the corpse and made some changes in its arrangement. In the new photographs that were published some details, such as the

Above: the giant trailer in which the iceman is hauled from fairground to fairground. Big though it is, Heuvelmans and Sanderson found themselves cramped when they were drawing and photographing the iceman

Below: Frank Hansen, showman. He tells scientists that his exhibit is a model, while hinting to the public that it is genuine. He once claimed to have shot the creature himself, while hunting in the Minnesota woods

left hand and the large teeth in the now open mouth, were clearly visible. Nevertheless, though it looked different, it was the same creature – and Heuvelmans and Sanderson still had no doubts that, whatever they had seen, it was no model. Moreover, Heuvelmans pointed out, no observer had seen the supposed model at the time of its manufacture, and the stories about it were little more than rumours.

But as far as the media and the scientists who take their information about unusual events from them were concerned, the affair had been exploded as a hoax. It was accepted that what the two enthusiasts, anxious for a great discovery, had thought was a primitive man originated in the imagination of a Hollywood artist. Sanderson himself came round to this view.

Then, in an article in another adventure magazine, Hansen claimed that he had shot the creature on a hunting trip in Minnesota some years before. 'Fact or fiction?' the headline asked. Later a thorough investigation of this story by a Chicago newspaper showed that there could be no truth in Hansen's new tale. Nor could there be any truth in a later story by a girl who claimed she had killed the creature while it was trying to rape her. The Minnesota iceman had become the property of the lunatic fringe.

John Napier summarised the story of the iceman in 1972 as a clever, well-executed hoax. Yet he could not understand how Ivan Sanderson and Bernard Heuvelmans, two zoologists of great experience, had been taken in so easily.

Heuvelmans retorted that he had not been fooled. The creature was real, he insisted, and he believed he had a full explanation of what it was and where it came from.

An origin for the Minnesota iceman is proposed on page 1978



No end to Borley

Were Harry Price, his detractors and his defenders, chasing ghosts in the wrong place by concentrating on Borley Rectory? FRANK SMYTH points to a case for a genuine haunting across the road at Borley church, under investigation since the 1970s

IN ALL HIS BORLEY investigations and writings, Harry Price paid scant attention to the 12th-century church itself. He was aware of a story, told to him by Ethel Bull in 1929, that coffins in the Waldegrave family vault under the church had been mysteriously moved at some time during the 19th century, but he made little attempt to follow up the matter. Price may have missed his real chance to confront the paranormal. For, since the early 1970s, unexplained events in and around the church – many of them recorded on tape – have proved to be far more baffling than anything that happened in the old rectory.

The manor of 'Barlea' – the Anglo-Saxon for 'boar's pasture' – was mentioned in Domesday Book, when a wooden church served the locality. The south wall of the present church contains remnants of the flint and rubble building erected in the 12th century. The chancel, the north wall of the



Below: Borley church, the major part of which was constructed in the 15th century. Should the many who investigated the Borley Rectory hauntings have looked here instead?

nave, and the west tower were added in the 15th century, followed a hundred years later by the red brick south porch.

In the little churchyard itself, planted around with clipped yews and horse chestnut trees, lie the graves of the Bull family. Vandals have broken the stone cross on that of the Rev. Harry Bull, the Victorian rector who drowned away his last days in the



summerhouse and reported seeing a ghostly nun and phantom coach. Geoffrey Croom-Hollingsworth, who runs a small psychical research group at Harlow, Essex, believes from his investigations that the cause of the rector's death in 1927 was syphilis. Advanced syphilis is accompanied by narcolepsy, a constant drowsiness, during which the sufferer hallucinates – a fact that would seem to explain the rector's 'visions' neatly. But Croom-Hollingsworth does not think this is the whole answer, for he and an assistant, Roy Potter, claim to have observed the phantom nun themselves for a period of about 12 minutes.

Croom-Hollingsworth came upon the Borley controversy in the 1960s and decided to examine the facts himself. He and his group began a series of vigils at Borley. Like subsequent investigators, they chose to keep watch at night to avoid interruption. Over a period of years, in differing weather conditions and at different times of year, they heard an assortment of noises: raps, heavy panting and the sound of furniture being moved. On one occasion while in the orchard, something huge and dark, 'like an animal', approached them between the fruit trees and banged loudly on the fence.

On another night, at about 3 a.m., the group heard 'laughter and merriment . . . which seemed to be coming up the road towards Borley church'. The night was misty, but there was sufficient light to see that nobody was in the roadway. Assuming that the voices were those of late-night



Above left: the Enfield Parapsychical Research Group at Borley church. Ronald R. Russell (far right), a founding member, leans towards Price's side in the controversy over Borley's hauntings. But the group have found the church itself of most interest and have done many tests with cameras and sound equipment (right)

Above right: the vandalised grave of the Reverend Harry Bull in Borley churchyard. Harry's father built the nearby rectory that became famous as 'the most haunted house in England', so drawing attention away from the church



revellers, but puzzled by the direction of the sound, Roy Potter got into his car and coasted down the road towards Long Melford with his engine off. He met nobody. Using his walkie-talkie link with Croom-Hollingsworth, he arranged the experiment of shouting at various points along the Long Melford road to see if the sound carried. The listeners in the churchyard heard nothing. In an attempt to record similar noises, a tape recorder was set up in the porch of the church, while the group kept watch from a distance. Nobody was seen to enter the porch, but the group heard a loud crash and found the tape recorder 'pretty well battered'. The tape had been torn from its reels and lay in a tangle.

But it was the sighting of the nun that convinced the Harlow group that something was indeed strange about Borley. One clear night, Croom-Hollingsworth was standing in the orchard, looking towards the 'nun's walk':

Suddenly I saw her quite clearly, in a grey habit and cowl as she moved across the garden and through a hedge. I thought 'is somebody pulling my leg?' Roy was out in the roadway, the nearest of the group, and I shouted to him. The figure had disappeared into a modern garage, and I thought that was that, but



as Roy joined me we both saw her come out of the other side. She approached to about 12 feet [3 metres] from us, and we both saw her face, that of an elderly woman in her sixties, perhaps. We followed her as she seemed to glide over a dry ditch as if it wasn't there, before she disappeared into a pile of building bricks. Neither of us was frightened. It was an odd sensation, but peaceful and tranquil.

Not surprisingly in view of his experiences, Croom-Hollingsworth has little time for the critics who point to the discrepancies in Price's account of the haunting. On the other hand, he says,

I don't give a damn if Price invented things or not. The basic question is – is the place haunted? And you can take it from me it is. I have invented nothing.

Roy and I saw the nun quite clearly for a period of about 12 minutes. . . .

Croom-Hollingsworth's determination impressed Denny Densham, a film director and cameraman. In 1974 he got permission to experiment with tape recorders in the church. The results, which were used by the

Above: the Waldegrave tomb, memorial to an old and influential Borley family. Local gossip had it that the Waldegrave coffins in the vault under the church were 'mysteriously moved' in the 19th century

Right: one of the stained glass windows of the church, dedicated to the Reverend Henry Bull. His retelling of the story of the ghostly nun of Borley Rectory gave a boost to the reputation of his family home as a haunted house

BBC as a basis for a television programme, are, Densham says, 'quite baffling'.

The first taping began at midnight during the winter months. After the church was carefully examined and searched, a cassette player was placed by the altar and the investigators sat at the other end of the church. The tape picked up a series of bumps and raps. Next, two tape recorders were locked up in the church, one by the altar and the other halfway down the aisle. Both picked up the unmistakable sound of a heavy door being opened and slammed shut, complete with the squeaking of a bolt. Neither the porch door nor the smaller chancel door had been opened – the researchers had kept watch on the church from outside – and examination showed that the chancel door bolt did not squeak.

The following week Densham and his team started their vigil at 12.30 a.m. They set up a sophisticated stereo tape with two high quality microphones, again placing one near the altar and the other halfway down the aisle; an additional cassette machine was positioned in front of the altar. Then half the team were locked into the church and the other half kept watch in the churchyard.

'Suddenly there was a curious change in the atmosphere,' said Densham. 'One of the team felt as if he was being watched, and we all felt very cold.' During the next few minutes the tapes picked up a clatter, as if something had been thrown down the aisle. There were also knockings, rappings, the sound of the door opening again – although both doors remained locked and bolted – and, chillingly, the sound of a human sigh. Afterwards, the team found that the small cassette recorder had jammed, and the tape



had been extracted and tangled up, as the Croom-Hollingsworth tape had been.

In July, the party visited Borley again. At 1.45 a.m., they felt a change in the atmosphere.

We all felt watched, and a curious tingling sensation was felt; oddly enough the machines seemed to pick up a lot of static at this point. We recorded stealthy sounds near the altar, the sound of the door shutting again, a crash as of something being knocked over, and then the sound of hollow, heavy footsteps, like those of a very large man walking by the altar rail. We could not reproduce them normally: the floor there is of stone, heavily carpeted.

The observers then saw a glow of light near the chancel door, followed by a terrifying grunt. On this, their final visit, the team saw pinpoints of light in the curtains by one door, and heard the sound of a heavy crash. Densham said:

Frankly, I am at a loss to explain what goes on at Borley. We made every effort to ensure that our legs weren't being pulled, and the tapes were new and untampered with. No theory I have tried to put forward seems to pan out. We tried leaving pencil and paper in the church, asked the thing to rap and so on, but it doesn't seem to be trying to communicate, unless the damage to the tapes and the throwing of invisible objects in our direction meant that it resented our presence. One's left with the feeling that whatever causes the phenomena is indifferent to or perhaps unaware of observers.

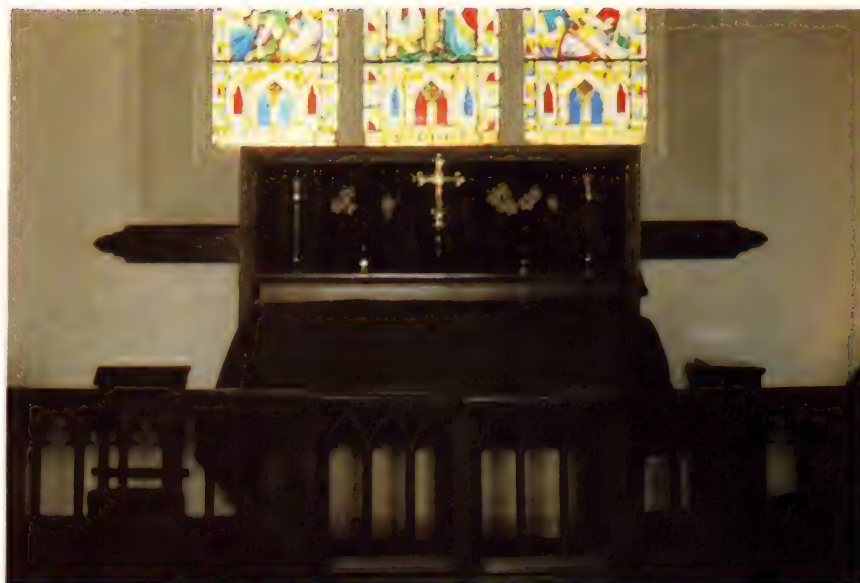
'Ectoplasm' in the churchyard

Since that summer of 1974, one of the most regular researchers at Borley has been Ronald R. Russell, a member of the Enfield Parapsychical Research Group and professional photographer. Frank Parry, an electrical engineer, and John Fay, a mechanical engineer, usually work with him. Russell has achieved odd results while taking photographs of the area with an Agfa CC2 I camera, in which the film is contained in a cassette and processed in the Agfa laboratory.

Sandwiched between perfectly normal frames we got 'ectoplasmic' stuff in the churchyard, shadows where no shadows should be, and a thin light near the north door. As a photographer I'm at a loss to explain this as camera or film malfunction.

Parry has used a graphic analyser, an eight-channel recording machine with slider controls that adjust pitch and level, cut out interference, and enable its operator to 'pin-point' sounds. As Russell said:

We have recorded hundreds of extraordinary noises, footsteps, crashes and so on. On one occasion we located a



The altar in Borley church. In 1974 some strange sounds – including raps, crashes and mysterious footsteps – were picked up here on a cassette recorder

centre of disturbance near the Waldegrave tomb; it was tangible, like a swirling column of energy. When you passed your hand through it you felt a sort of crackle, like static electricity. On another occasion we heard a deep, grunting voice, which reminded me irresistibly of Lee Marvin singing *Wandering Star*.

Russell is inclined to side with the Price faction on Borley, though he concedes that Price may have embellished facts.

I think there may be three basic factors at work here. First, the nun. There would be nothing odd about a nun in the household of a Catholic family like the Waldegraves. Perhaps the apparition which Mr Croom-Hollingsworth saw is simply a psychic record of some such person. Secondly, there seems to be some sort of power concentrated in the church itself. It is on the intersection of two ley lines, and when you try dowsing in the church the rod practically twists from your hands. Thirdly, I would suggest that the power is boosted by the presence of observers, and also that it waxes and wanes with the seasons; in January phenomena are sporadic, while in August they seem to be at full flood.

The church authorities are non-committal, preferring to avoid discussion of the topic. But in the parish guidebook, under the heading 'ghosts', is a footnote:

There are, of course, those who suggest the church itself is haunted. Many old churches and buildings have noises and chill areas which some would classify as ghostly, but those who have lived long in the village and we who worship in the church have not experienced anything which would support such thoughts. . . . Visitors should please remember that this is God's house and treat it with reverence.

Further reading

Trevor H. Hall, *Search for Harry Price*, Duckworth 1978
 Harry Price, *Search for truth*, Collins 1942
 Harry Price, *The most haunted house in England*, New Portway Reprints 1966
 Harry Price, *The end of Borley Rectory*, New Portway Reprints 1967
 Peter Underwood and Paul Tabori, *The ghosts of Borley: annals of the haunted rectory*, David & Charles 1973



An animal lover's album

Spirit photography, whether by amateurs or professionals, has its gallery of ghostly cats, dogs and other animals – usually pets – that appear as unexpected ‘extras’.

FREDERICK GOODMAN gives some fascinating examples

THE MAJORITY OF SPIRIT photographs in which there are animal ‘extras’ have been made unintentionally. They have generally been taken by amateur photographers who have been most surprised to find the curious images on their films, but who have usually recognised the identity of the unexpected spirit forms.

An interesting example of this is a picture taken by Major Wilmot Allistone at Clarens, in Switzerland, in August 1925. At first glance it seems a somewhat badly composed family snap, but on closer inspection it reveals itself as a remarkable psychic photograph. The Major was surprised and intrigued to discover that the developed print bore a faint image of a white semi-transparent kitten, nestling above the right hand of his son alongside the furry toy animal that the child held in his left hand. The boy had held no such kitten when the picture was being taken. But what astonished the Major was the fact that this ghostly kitten resembled the boy's pet, which had died a few days previously, having been mauled by a St Bernard dog.

The Allistone family and a surprising ‘extra’ in the form of a kitten, which showed up as though nestled in the boy's hand along with the toy he held (seen clearly in the detail). The most astonishing thing about the spirit animal was that it resembled the child's recently killed pet

The negative and prints of this fascinating photograph were later submitted to extensive investigation by experts, who even studied the negative under a stereoscopic microscope. The appearance of the dead pet was never explained.

Another example, though in some respects even more peculiar, is the picture that was submitted to the British College of Psychic Science in 1927. This was an ordinary photograph of Lady Hehir and her Irish wolfhound Tara taken by a Mrs Filson. The picture proved to be far from ordinary, however. The extra in this case is no semi-transparent wraith but a very substantial puppy head, curiously misplaced at the rear end of the wolfhound. Both Mrs Filson and Lady Hehir recognised this disjointed extra as the Cairn puppy Kathal, which had been a close companion of the wolfhound. It had died in August 1926, about six weeks before the picture was taken.

In her signed declaration submitted to the college, Lady Hehir remarked, ‘I feel convinced that he [the Cairn puppy] is often in the room with Tara and me, as she talks in a soft cooing way to something she evidently “sees”.’

One cannot have pets for very long without observing that they appear at times to see visitants invisible to the human eye – and whether these are ghosts, elementals, or

some other sort of being is open to discussion. However, one unusual photograph shows a pet actually watching a form that was invisible to the photographer at the time. It was intended to be an ordinary flash picture of Monet, the pet cat, taken by his owner Alfred Hollidge in 1974. The Hollidge family had only one cat and there was certainly no other cat in the house when the picture was being taken. But the developed negatives showed a dark animal running in front of Monet – a small kitten, or a large rat, with a curiously long tail-like attachment trailing behind. There is no way of being sure what Hollidge himself saw, for he left the negatives for some months before sending them off for processing, and he died before they were returned – so he never examined the final prints. But it is more than likely that he would have remarked on anything strange when taking the photograph, and would have been anxious to see the prints had he observed the dark intruder. Perhaps the most interesting thing about this spirit photograph is that Monet seems to be watching something in the area in which the extra appeared on the print.

A number of spirit photographs with animal extras have been taken by professionals. The well-established American psychic photographer Edward Wyllie took a picture in which the spirits of both a woman and a dog appeared. It was taken in Los Angeles, California, in 1897 for J. Wade Cunningham, who later sent the English



Above: a pet cat and a ghostly dark intruder that apparently was unseen by the photographer – but the cat seems to be watching it with intense concentration

Below: a Cairn puppy, dead about six weeks, makes a curiously out-of-place appearance on this picture of its mistress and the wolfhound that was its close companion in life



journalist and Spiritualist William T. Stead a long account of its making.

According to Cunningham, a female medium would often tell him of the beautiful woman who would sometimes appear when he was present. This spirit woman was frequently accompanied by a dog that barked and jumped 'with delight' at the sound of Cunningham's voice. One day the medium asked the spirit if she would be prepared to bring the dog and sit for a photograph. Wyllie, not knowing what was expected of him, was commissioned to make this spirit picture. The print he produced revealed both the beautiful woman and the dog, which Cunningham happily recognised as a pet he had owned many years before.

The English medium and psychic photographer William Hope rarely took open-air pictures, but while on holiday in Exmouth, Devon, in 1924, he took some snapshots of his assistant, Mrs Buxton, and her family on the steps of their caravan. The print is badly faded now, but it is still possible to see a number of curious extras. Mrs Buxton herself is all but blotted out by an ectoplasmic cloud, and above her, swathed in this mist, is an image of the face of her son, who had died in the previous year. She later said that, while the picture was being taken, she was 'wishing that he could have been one of the group'.

Alongside the son's head to the right is a form that clearly resembles the head of a horse or pony. The family recognised this as the son's white pony Tommy – which had died a short time before the son.

A third extra is harder to see. This is superimposed over Mr Buxton's waistcoat, and is the image of an old man. Mr Buxton reported that it was a portrait of his brother, who had died some time previously.

The faded quality of this Hope picture is a reminder that very few spirit photographs survive the ravages of time. It is a pity that the one made by the little-known psychic photographer Dr Stanbury in the 1880s could not be preserved.

It seems that a certain Mrs Cabell had



Left: both the woman and the dog in this photograph were allegedly spirits, captured on film by the psychic Edward Wyllie. He was commissioned to take the picture without knowing what was expected of him

Right: a number of 'extras' crowd this picture taken by the English medium William Hope. There is the woman's dead son (in the cloud of ectoplasm), a pony's head to the right of the boy's head (recognised as a dead pet) and the image of an old man to the left of the boy's head (recognised as the boy's dead uncle)



Below: a strange animal form obtained during a series of experimental seances in the studio of a photographer



owned two dogs, one an old carriage dog with the grandiloquent name of Secretary Stanton, the other a small black-and-tan named Fanny. The two dogs were close friends, and died of old age within a few hours of each other. Some four years after their deaths, Mrs Cabell was spending the summer at Onset Bay in Massachusetts, USA, and was invited to a seance.

The medium observed on the psychic plane a 'little wee bit of a dog' jumping around Mrs Cabell, and when she examined the collar, she found the name 'Fanny' inscribed upon it. Mrs Cabell was of course very excited, and took up with interest the suggestion that they visit Dr Stanbury, who was nearby, to see if he could take a picture of her old pet. Mrs Cabell later told this story:

Imagine my surprise at seeing my little pet cuddle up under my arm. And my surprise I cannot express at seeing the old coachdog, Stanton, also. He occupied the most prominent position, and had almost crowded out of sight his little friend in his eagerness to get there himself. . . . The dogs' pictures have been recognised by hundreds of people who knew them when in life. . . . It was four years after their death, or passing away, when this photograph was taken, which I prize beyond all price.

Animals at times appear in the seance room as well. A sort of ape creature appeared on a photograph of the famous Polish medium Franek Kluski (see page 1847), who was also photographed with an owl-like bird hovering over his back. This bird, which seems almost to be attacking Kluski, was not seen in the room before or after the seance. A totally unexplained image of a bat-like creature

appeared above a cloud of ectoplasm in a picture taken by Staveley Bulford, a member of the British College of Psychic Science, in 1921. The cadaverous humanoid face of the bat appears to have been built out of a special kind of ectoplasm, which Bulford himself described as 'a quite different kind of ectoplasm, very dense and quite non-luminous'.

The series of seances that produced the ectoplasmic bat were conducted in the photographic studio of a Mr Scott between May and July 1921. They produced some extraordinary psychic pictures, as well as later 'communications' from the photographed spirits.

Pictures obtained during these experimental seances were varied in subject matter, though they included the 'standard' portraits of spirits, swathed in ectoplasmic cotton wool or curiously unrelated ectoplasmic structures. One was of the plant, rather than the animal, world. It was extremely clear and detailed, in the form of a spray with thick velvety leaves, and flowers reminiscent of an edelweiss. But the animal world was represented, in a photograph taken of Scott himself: above his head there appeared a quaint animal with a long, winding tail within a cloud of shiny ectoplasm.

While many psychic photographers tried deliberately to catch human spirits with the camera, few made a conscious effort to photograph animal spirits. Perhaps this is why animal spirit photography occurs so rarely.

The study of spirit photography, and of its fakery, is fascinating. And study reinforces the evidence that many psychic photographs are genuine – whether of 'extras', thoughts, or other manifestations.

Further reading

Hereward Carrington, *The invisible world*, Rider & Co. 1946

James Coates, *Photographing the invisible*, L.N. Fowler 1912

Fred Gettings, *Ghosts in photographs*, Harmony Books (New York) 1978

Robert Rickard and Richard Kelly, *Photographs of the unknown*, New English Library 1980

D. Scott Rogo, *Phantoms: experiences and investigations*, David & Charles 1976

continued from back cover

by those receiving the message would be ruled out. Since no living person would know it, telepathy would likewise be excluded. And since those who received the message would not know the encoded passage, they could not be suspected of unconsciously performing some superhuman feat of codebreaking.

In another type of test the message to be sent by the deceased is the key not to a coded message but to a combination padlock, which the subject would have set while still alive.

To record a voice on tape giving a key phrase that would unlock a combination padlock or unscramble a coded phrase in this way would be, in Dr Berger's opinion, the strongest evidence yet obtained for survival after death.

Elaborate precautions will be taken to make the experiments scientifically rigorous. The experimenters who first organise a subject's participation will not know the mediums or recording technicians who will later attempt to receive posthumous messages from that subject; nor will these 'receivers' have contact with the subject during the latter's life.

To take part in the experiments Dr Berger is seeking not only subjects but also first-rate sensitives, and recording engineers with the expertise and equipment necessary to undertake the recording of 'voices from the dead'. The whole project is a large-scale, long-term enterprise that over many years will accumulate a mass of results, whether positive, negative or mixed. From these results it may be possible to establish significant results concerning the reality of survival after bodily death.

Survival pacts

The British experiment is considerably simpler than the SRF project. It was inspired by the reports – possibly factual, possibly unfounded – of pacts in which friends have agreed that whoever died first should try to communicate information to the living friend. The experiment aims to set up a number of such pacts and analyse their results, to provide evidence on the question of survival.

The scheme would work as follows. Pairs of friends would be asked to make such pacts and to register them with the organisers. The 'message' to be communicated would be the fact of the occurrence of death. It could take the form of a simple conviction by the 'receiver', or it could involve some kind of visual or auditory imagery. Both partners would agree in the pact that the recipient of the communication would instantly inform a third party, giving the fullest details, and that both recipient and

third party should write these down independently, with the time and date of the occurrence. Copies of these documents should be posted immediately to the scheme's Registrar, David Christie-Murray, who will keep a register of all participants.

In time a quantity of evidence will be collected that can be evaluated statistically. The scheme can be continued over a number of decades under the auspices of a responsible society such as ASSAP. Non-believers in survival would be encouraged to join the scheme, for there could well be a 'sheep and goats' effect in this as in other forms of paranormal experiment: that is, success may depend on the participants' belief or disbelief in the reality of the phenomenon being investigated.

Distant friends

Ideally, pairs of subjects should have been very close at some period of their lives and have stayed in touch though living separate lives some distance apart; they would then not have intimate knowledge of each other's circumstances and state of health.

After the experiment has been in progress for a time we shall know how often 'false alarms' occur and this will enable the experimenters to assess more accurately the significance of 'hits'. A conviction that someone has died, when confirmed, will have less weight as evidence if the experience follows a series of 'false alarms' occurring to the same person. It will also have less weight if the person having the experience knows that the deceased person has been on his sickbed. On the other hand, an intuition, subsequently confirmed, of the death of someone who was young and in good health would be an impressive piece of evidence.

The detailed course of the study cannot be foreseen, however. Factors not yet thought of may emerge and need to be taken into account. The important thing is that in this study, as in the American one, a body of hard, attested evidence will gradually accumulate.

Readers interested in taking part in either of these experiments are invited to write to: Dr Arthur S. Berger, Survival Research Foundation, PO Box 8565, Pembroke Pines, Florida 33024, USA; or to: Mr D. Christie-Murray, Imber Court Cottage, Orchard Lane, East Molesey, Surrey KT8 0BN, England.

Key to the afterlife?

Readers of *The Unexplained* have the opportunity to participate in two long-term projects designed to provide evidence for – or against – survival after death. One is being conducted under the auspices of two British organisations: the Association for the Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena (ASSAP) and the Survival Joint Research Committee Trust. The other is being conducted by the Survival Research Foundation (SRF) in the United States.

The programme begun by the SRF, under its president Dr Arthur S. Berger, is based on ingenious cipher tests. Two of these were devised by the distinguished parapsychologists Robert H. Thouless and Ian Stevenson. The tests are designed to establish whether information can be sent to the living by a deceased person. Dr Berger views death as merely 'retirement from life', and so he regards participation in his experiment as a way of having an active 'retirement'.

The SRF is ready to accept anyone as a subject in the programme and to train them in the working of

the tests. Lectures and workshops are held, but easy-to-follow instructions can also be sent by post. The participant's distance from the SRF's headquarters in Florida need be no barrier.

In one test the subject is taught to encode a message of his own choosing. To do this he must use a key word or phrase known only to himself. The key is essential for deciphering the message. The subject leaves the coded message – meaningless to anyone but himself – with the SRF. The subject is not to record or communicate the key to any other living person. The programme is therefore called 'Project Unrecorded Information'.

After the subject's death the SRF will attempt to receive a message from him by means of mediums or by tape recording. If that message contains the key word or phrase the coded message can be deciphered. To decode the message in this way would be spectacular evidence for the survival of the personality – even if only in some limited form. Since no record of the key would exist, clairvoyance

The dead are resurrected in Stanley Spencer's *A village in heaven*. Can survival after death be proved?

continued overleaf

